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ABSTRACT

One of a series of reports which use Census Bureau data to provide perspective on important demographic and socioeconomic trends and patterns, this analysis describes changes that have affected women's roles in the last 30 years. Topics discussed are: marriage, divorce, widowhood, childbearing, household and family living arrangements, education, labor force participation, earnings, and per capita income and poverty. Conclusions include the following. Fertility is lower, and labor force participation is higher. Women are marrying later now than they did 30 years ago, and thus have more time to attend school or gain work experience prior to marriage. Women are getting divorced more often, but they are also remarrying at a high rate. Since 1950, relatively more women are completing college and higher degrees, but they are still majoring in traditionally female fields. The average earnings of women in relation to men have not risen over the past 30 years. Appendices contain tables showing marital status by age and sex and changes in the distribution of women across family statuses. (RM)

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SPECIAL
DEMOGRAPHIC
ANALYSES

CDS-80-8

American Women:

Three Decades of Change

Suzanne M. Bianchi
and
Daphne Spain

Issued August 1983

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Preface

This study is another in a series of analytic reports from the Census Bureau's Center for Demographic Studies. The purpose of these publications is to provide perspective on important demographic and socioeconomic trends and patterns. Most of these analyses bring together data from several sources and attempt to enhance the use of Census Bureau data by pointing out the relevance of the statistics for current and prospective policy concerns. A distinguishing feature of the studies is the inclusion of interpretive analyses and hypotheses offered by the authors as aids in identifying the factors underlying change. This report also provides analytic interpretation of the 1980 census results concurrently with the release of detailed socioeconomic data from the Census sample data.

The authors are research associates in the Center for Demographic Studies and are currently collaborating on a 1980 Census Research Monograph on the status of women. Suzanne Bianchi received a Ph.D. degree in sociology from the University of Michigan. She has written a book entitled Household Composition and Racial Inequality and her work has appeared in Demography, The Journal of Marriage and the Family, and Social Science Research. Daphne Spain holds a Ph.D. degree in sociology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. With Shirley Laska, she edited the book, Back to the City: Issues in Neighborhood Renovation (Pergamon Press, 1980), and her work has appeared in Demography, Urban Affairs Quarterly, and Social Forces. Her Census Bureau publications include Racial Succession in Individual Housing Units (with Larry Long, 1978), and Housing Successions Among Blacks and Whites in Cities and Suburbs (with John Reid and Larry Long, 1980).

The authors would like to thank Reynolds Farley, Larry Long, Karen Mills, Kristin Moore, Martin O'Connell, Carolyn Rogers, Nancy Rytina, and Cynthia Taeuber for useful suggestions incorporated in the final draft. Typing assistance was provided by Peggy Glorius and Darlene Young. Rick Carlson aided in developing the graphics for the report.

Women have been at the vortex of sweeping changes in demographic, social, and economic patterns. During the 15 immediate post-World War II years, American women bore and nurtured the massive baby boom generation. Indeed, in the early 1960's most American women seemed to be reading Dr. Benjamin Spock's Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care. After its publication in 1946, over one million paperback copies were sold every year, or approximately one for every 2.6 women aged 15 to 44 by 1960 (Bloom, 1972). By 1980, however, there had been a complete reversal. Childbearing had fallen below natural replacement levels and many women were concentrating on jobs and education. Indeed, many American women were becoming doctors themselves. Between 1950 and 1979, the number of female physicians in the United States increased from 584 to 3,405 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1981a), and for the first time, more women than men were enrolled in college in 1980.

Participation of women in the labor force has increased from about one-third of all adult women in 1950 to more than half in 1980. Women with preschool age children registered the largest increases in labor force participation; while less than one-fourth of those mothers were in the labor force in the 1950's, the majority were by the early 1980's. Employed women are still concentrated in relatively few occupations, and although their numbers and proportions in higher-paying professional and technical jobs have increased somewhat, their earnings continue to average about 60 percent of men's; that ratio has not shown a sustained change.

This report describes changes that have affected women's roles in the last 30 years, drawing on data from decennial censuses and surveys conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND WIDOWHOOD

The vast majority of Americans marry; in 1980, over 90 percent of women and 85 percent of men over the age of 30 had been married at least once. In addition to being perceived as an avenue to emotional and psychological fulfillment, marriage is a source of financial security. When marriage ends through divorce, the financial well-being of the woman tends to suffer more than that of the man (Hoffman, 1976). Currently, a large fraction of the

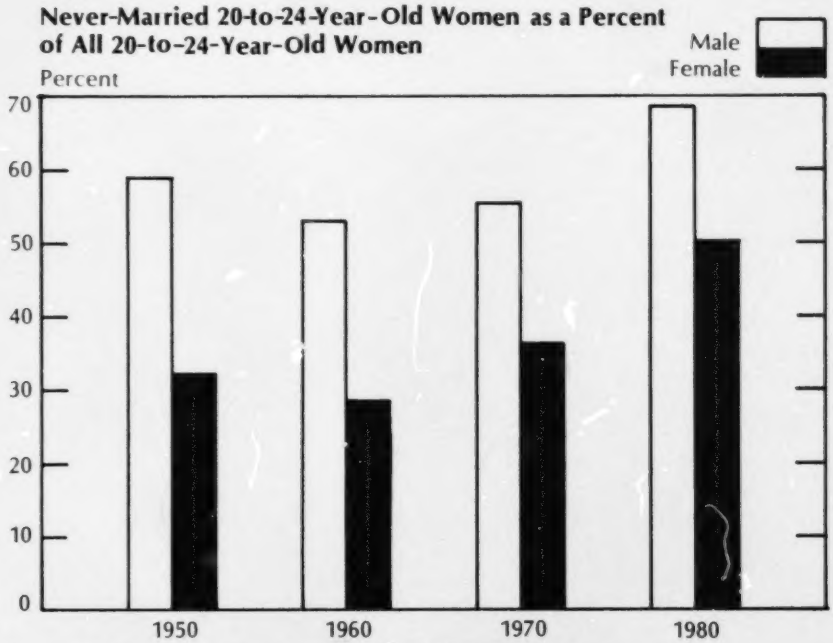
households living below the poverty level are headed by females; a majority of whom are either divorced with children or elderly widows.

Although most women spend a major portion of their adult lives with a spouse, changes in the timing and duration of marriage in recent decades have altered the centrality of marriage for women at certain stages of the life cycle. Especially important is the delay in first marriage. Women are now marrying almost 2 years later, on average, than they did after the second World War, as a growing share remain single until after the typical age of college graduation.

Between 1950 and 1980, the average age at first marriage increased from 20.3 to 22.1 years. The proportion of women aged 20 to 24 who had never married rose from approximately one-fourth in 1950 to 45 percent in 1980 (figure 1). Later marriage may lower the risk of divorce (Carlson and Stinson, 1982; Moore and Waite, 1981) and result in later childbearing and smaller families (Bumpass, Rindfuss, and Janosik, 1978; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1978). For example, women aged 50 to 54 in 1980 who had married at age 18 or 19 had 3.3 children, on average, whereas women who had married between ages 30 and 34 had only 1.9 children (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1982f: Table 17).

Figure 1.

Never-Married 20-to-24-Year-Old Women as a Percent of All 20-to-24-Year-Old Women



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975: Series A 160-171; 1981b: table 1.

Differences in marital status for men and women are most pronounced at the youngest and oldest ages. Until around age 35, women are more likely than men to be married. Men too, have been marrying later, and the 2.5 year gap in median age of brides and grooms has shown no change (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981b: table A), although there has been narrowing of the sex differential in percent single among persons under 25. Still, the proportion of women who are married remains about three times that for men among 18 and 19 year olds (17 compared with 5 percent), and 1 1/2 times that for men among 20 to 24 year olds (46 versus 30 percent). Women continue to have fewer years in which to complete higher education and establish themselves in the labor market prior to marriage than do men.

At the older end of the age spectrum, women are decidedly less likely to be married than men. In both 1950 and 1980, about one-half of all women 65 and over were widowed. In contrast, the proportion of elderly men who were widowed declined from 24 to 14 percent between 1950 and 1980. The life expectancy of women at age 65 now exceeds that of men by 4 1/2 years (National Center for Health Statistics, 1982a: table 3), so that wives tend to outlive their husbands. Widowed men are also more likely to remarry than widowed women, partly because there are more older women than men (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976: table C).

Marriages end through divorce as well as through the death of a spouse. The total rate of marital dissolutions (number of marriages ending in divorce or death in a given year per 1,000 existing marriages) has not changed much over the past 100 years. In the 1960's, for example, the combined rate was 34.5 dissolutions per 1,000 existing marriages (Bane, 1976). By 1978, the total dissolution rate had risen slightly to 40.5 (Cherlin, 1981). However, death rates have declined at the same time divorce rates have risen and, as a result, divorce has become the more important component. The divorce rate more than doubled between 1963 and 1975, from 2.3 to 4.8 per 1,000 population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976:2). The 1970's were the first time in American history that more marriages ended every year in divorce than in death, and current estimates are that almost one-half of all marriages that occurred in the early 1970's will end in divorce (Cherlin, 1981).

The proportion of women who reported themselves divorced rose from 2.4 percent of all those aged 15 and over in 1950 to 6.6 percent in 1980. Proportions divorced are highest for women in their thirties and early forties and rose to 11.1 percent for women aged 30 to 34 in 1980. (See appendix table 1.)

The results of delay in first marriages and dissolution of existing ones are reflected in the lower proportions of women who are currently married at each successive census

date. The proportion of adult women who were married declined from 67 percent in 1950 to 59 percent in 1980. That decline would have been even greater if it were not for remarriage. Among adult women in 1975, 18 percent of those divorced had remarried once and another 5 percent had remarried more than once. Among persons aged 50 to 75 in 1975, 3 of every 4 women and 5 of every 6 men whose first marriage ended in divorce had remarried (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976: tables B and C).

The number of first marriages has always exceeded the number of remarriages, but between 1950 and the late 1970's, as the divorce rate rose, the rate of remarriage (number per 1,000 divorced or widowed women aged 14 to 54) surpassed the rate of first marriage (number per 1,000 never married women aged 14 to 44). The remarriage rate peaked at 166 between 1966 and 1968, while the rate of first marriage during those years dropped to 107. By the end of the 1970's, the remarriage rate had fallen to 129 and the first marriage rate was 83 (Glick and Norton, 1973; Norton and Glick, 1979).

Despite rising divorce rates and lower first marriage rates, marriage has not lost its position as the predominant form of living arrangement during at least some period of a woman's life. Available data provide no evidence that lifetime singlehood is increasing. About 9 percent of women aged 65 and over had never married in 1950, compared with 6 percent in 1980. A similar decline has occurred for men. (see appendix table 1.) In spite of changes in timing and duration, the institution of marriage shows resiliency because the companionship, mutual respect and affection, and financial well-being that marriage can provide are highly valued. Most people also want children and marriage is seen as the precursor to childbearing.

CHILDBEARING

The majority of American women are mothers by the end of their childbearing years. In 1980, for example, only about 6 percent of all ever-married women aged 40 to 44 remained childless, but there have been significant changes in the timing of births. The proportion of ever-married women in their twenties who have not had a child rose dramatically between 1960 and 1980, as shown in table 1. In the 1960's, there was a move from having children before age 25 to having them between 25 and 30. In the 1970's, a significant group of women have delayed childbearing until after age 30. By ages 30 to 34, the proportion childless drops considerably and by ages 35 to 39 only 8 percent of ever-married women in 1980 were still childless. In other words, 92 out of every 100 ever-married women in 1980 were mothers by age 40.

Table 1. Childless Women as a Percent of Ever-Married Women, by Age: 1950 to 1980

Age	1950	1960	1970	1980
Total, 15-44	22.8	15.0	16.4	18.8
15-19	52.8	43.6	50.9	49.3
20-24	33.3	24.2	35.7	40.5
25-29	21.1	12.6	15.8	25.5
30-34	17.3	10.4	8.3	13.6
35-39	19.1	11.1	7.3	7.7
40-44	20.0	14.1	8.6	6.4

Note: Data for 1950, 1960, and 1970 are based on the decennial census. Data for 1980 represent an average computed from data collected in the 1979, 1980, and 1981 June fertility supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975: Series B49-66; 1981g: table 9; 1982c: table 5-2.

Delayed childbearing may have beneficial consequences for women. Women who become mothers before age 21 tend to finish fewer years of school than those who have children earlier, and these young mothers show no evidence of catching up in educational attainment at later ages (Waite and Moore, 1978; McCarthy and Radish, 1982). Because education is so closely linked to labor force opportunities, lower attainment often translates into lower earnings later in life. Early childbearers also have larger families (Bumpass et al., 1978; Trussel and Menken, 1978) and a higher incidence of poverty than women who bear children later in life (Hofferth and Moore, 1979).

Whereas table 1 clearly demonstrates that changes in the timing of childbearing have occurred, it does not necessarily support the notion that childlessness is increasing. Of course, we do not yet know if the young women who are currently postponing the birth of a first child will emerge from their childbearing years with a higher proportion childless than for previous generations. But between 1950 and 1980, the proportion of ever-married women aged 40 to 44 who were childless declined dramatically from 20 to 6 percent.

Part of this decline results from cohort differences: Women whose prime childbearing years occurred during the Depression and World War II had unusually high levels of childlessness, while those whose childbearing occurred in the 1950's and early 1960's had unusually low levels of childlessness.

Families have become smaller than in the 1950's and current birth expectations of American women remain low by past standards. In 1965, the anticipated number of children was 3.1 for married White women aged 18 to 24. By the late 1970's, those at the beginning of their reproductive years expected to have only 2.0 children. Data for married Black women the same age reveal a parallel but an even greater decline from 3.4 expected births in 1965 to 2.0 in 1979 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978: table 3-1; 1980a: table 1).

Aggregate measures indicate that fertility has declined considerably since 1950. The crude birth rate (births per 1,000 population) declined from 24.1 in 1950 to 16.1 in 1980. For a given year, the total fertility rate (TFR) indicates the number of births a group of 1,000 women would have by the end of their childbearing years, if they all survived and experienced the age-specific birth rates for that year. The TFR was 3.3 children per woman in 1950. By 1980, the rate had dropped to 1.8 children per woman, a lifetime average well below the level needed for natural replacement of the population (National Center for Health Statistics, 1982b). The recent decline seems to be a continuation of an historical trend toward lower fertility among all industrialized nations, and in this light, the baby boom of the 1950's and 1960's is the demographic anomaly.

As marital fertility has fallen, fertility outside of marriage has increased. The rate has risen from 16 births per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15 to 44 in the early 1950's to 25 in the mid-1970's (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978: table 5-2). Differences in birth rates for single women are particularly pronounced by race. In 1950-54, 2 percent of all White births and 19 percent of all Black births occurred outside of marriage. In 1970-74, 6 percent of all White and 43 percent of all Black births occurred outside of marriage (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978: table 5-1). In 1979, more Black births occurred outside than within marriage (National Center for Health Statistics, 1981).

Racial differences in overall fertility persist, although Black fertility declines parallel those of Whites. Table 2 shows births to date, expected lifetime births, and the percent expecting to remain childless for all women 18 to 34 regardless of marital status. On average, Black and Hispanic women have had about 50 percent more births than White women, and their lifetime birth expectations exceed those of Whites.

Fertility and birth expectations vary inversely with educational attainment, occupation and labor force status,

Table 2. Births to Date and Lifetime Births Expected per Woman and Percent Expecting to Remain Childless, by Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status: June 1981

Characteristic	Births to Date	Lifetime Births Expected	Percent Expecting to Remain Childless
RACE/ETHNICITY			
White	1.1	2.0	11.2
Black	1.6	2.2	9.0
Spanish origin	1.5	2.3	7.1
EDUCATION			
Less than high school	1.8	2.4	6.9
High school graduate	1.2	2.0	10.0
Some college	0.8	2.0	11.9
College graduate	0.6	1.8	16.5
Graduate training	0.6	1.7	19.5
LABOR FORCE STATUS			
In labor force	0.8	1.9	13.6
Employed	0.8	1.9	14.0
Unemployed	1.0	2.1	9.8
Not in labor force	1.7	2.3	5.5
OCCUPATION			
Professionals/managers	0.6	1.7	19.0
Sales/clerical workers	0.8	1.9	13.6
Blue-collar workers	1.2	1.9	11.8
Service workers	1.0	2.1	10.6
Farm workers	1.3	2.4	11.9
FAMILY INCOME			
Under $5,000	1.5	2.3	8.0
$5,000 to $9,999	1.3	2.1	10.5
$10,000 to $14,999	1.1	2.0	12.0
$15,000 to $19,999	1.2	2.0	9.5
$20,000 to $24,999	1.1	2.0	10.3
$25,000 and over	0.9	2.0	12.2

Note: Includes women of all marital statuses, 18 to 34 years of age. Women of Spanish origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982d: table 1.

and family income. The higher a woman's educational attainment, the fewer births she has had or expects and the greater the likelihood that she plans to have no children. Women with 5 or more years of college expect to have 1.7 children, on average, and 20 percent do not plan to have children at all. By contrast, women who have not completed high school have already had 1.8 births, expect to have an additional .6 births, on average, and only 7 percent plan to have no children. A similar but weaker inverse relationship applies to family income and fertility. Women with the highest family income have the fewest children (.9 on average), whereas women with very low family income have the highest fertility (1.5 children on average). Women in white-collar occupations have had fewer births to date than blue-collar, service, or farm workers. And a relatively large group (19 percent) of women in professional and managerial occupations do not plan to have children.

A long and unresolved debate exists over the relationship between fertility and labor force participation. The two are clearly inversely related, but the causal mechanism is less clear. The central question is whether women limit their family size because they want to work outside the home or whether a small family allows a woman the time to work at different stages of the life-cycle. On the one hand, working wives want fewer children and thus limit their fertility (Pratt and Whelpton, 1956; Ridley, 1959; Whelpton et al., 1966), and women who plan on paid employment also plan to have smaller families than women with no labor force expectations (Blake, 1970; Farley, 1970; Stolzenberg and Waite, 1977). On the other hand, number and age of children help to explain whether or not a woman chooses to work outside the home (Freedman et al., 1959; Sweet, 1973). Models that allow for reciprocal causation between fertility and labor force variables have not fully resolved the controversy. (See Stolzenberg and Waite, 1977; Smith-Lovin and Tickamyer, 1978; Cramer, 1980; Smith-Lovin and Tickamyer, 1982; Cramer, 1982.) Whatever the causal direction or the relationship among the variables, the end result is that working women have fewer children than women who do not work. In 1980, employed women aged 18 to 34 had 0.8 children, on average, whereas women of the same age who were not in the labor force had an average of 1.7 children. And, whereas 14 percent of employed women expected to have no children, only 6 percent of women not in the labor force expected to remain childless.

HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Rising divorce rates, lower fertility, and delays in first marriages have altered the structure of American house-

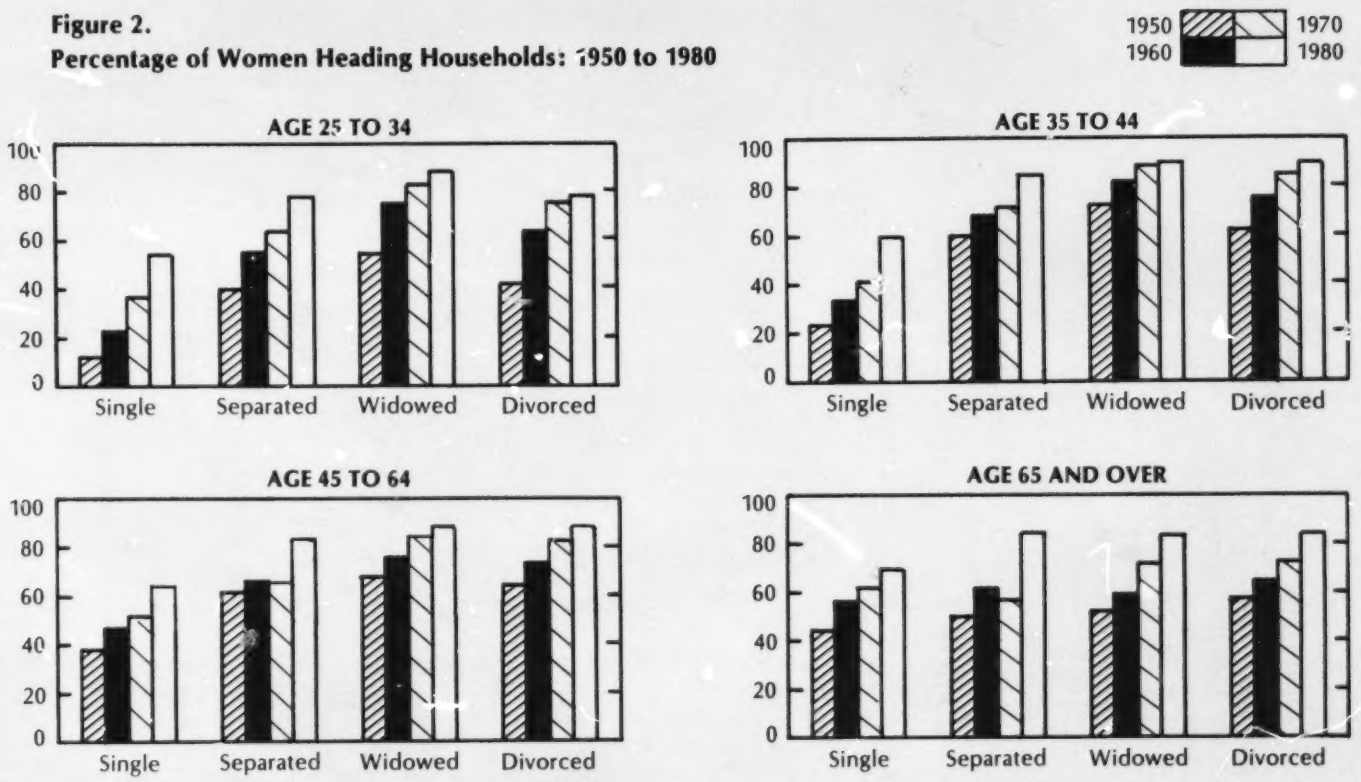
holds, as have the aging of the "baby boom," growth of the elderly population, and continued sex differentials in mortality. Economic variables such as the price of housing and the ability to afford one's own home or apartment have interacted with these demographic factors to affect household composition. Mean household size declined from 3.37 to 2.75 persons per household between 1950 and 1980, and the share of all households which included a husband-wife couple dropped from 78 to 61 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975; 1981a). For women, the most important change in living arrangements has been the increase in the proportion who head households.

Census publications often distinguish between family households (in which members are related by blood, marriage, or adoption) and nonfamily households (in which an individual either lives alone or with nonrelatives). Women have come to maintain a growing proportion of both types of households. Women over 25 are typically past the young adult years when living arrangements are in a state of flux because of college attendance, entry into first job, or entry into marriage, and have come to maintain an increased proportion of families and an even larger proportion of nonfamily households. (See appendix table 2.)

Among younger women, the increase in headship has come about both because later marriage and higher rates of divorce mean fewer such women are living with a husband, and because there has been a decline in the proportion who live in a relative or nonrelative's home rather than forming their own households. At older ages, the increase in household headship has come about because a much higher proportion live alone (or with nonrelatives, in some cases) now than in 1950. Until the older ages, the overwhelming majority of women (at least White women) live with a spouse. However, by 1980, a growing and significant minority of younger women had the responsibility of managing a household by themselves and half of women over 65 were maintaining their own separate residences.

A variety of analyses of the increase in female-headed households have appeared in the literature. (See Cooney, 1979; Cutright, 1974; Kobrin, 1976; Ross and Sawhill, 1975.) Each attempts to demonstrate what part of the increase is a function of population growth and changing age structure or changing marital status and presence of children, and what part represents a "true" change in the propensity of women to form their own households. Different techniques lead to somewhat different assessments of the relative importance of each component, but all concur that there has been a significant increase in the propensity of women to form and manage independent households. As shown in figure 2, within each age group and among all marital statuses, headship

Figure 2.
Percentage of Women Heading Households: 1950 to 1980



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1953: table 1; 1964; table 2; 1973; table 2; 1981b: table 6.

rates have increased for women since 1950. In some cases the increase has been particularly dramatic, such as for young single women, 54 percent of whom headed their own households in 1980, compared with 12 percent in 1950. For each age and marital status group, the change has been at least 20 percentage points.

What has happened in the past 30 years to encourage greater household formation on the part of women? Michael, Fuchs, and Scott (1980) emphasize the increased economic ability of both men and women to afford their own separate households as the important determinant of rising headship rates. Among younger women, there has been a sustained increase in the rate of labor force participation which no doubt has added to women's ability to afford their own residences both prior to marriage and following a divorce or separation. Increased Social Security benefits have also improved the financial status of widows. As Kobrin (1973; 1976) has pointed out, however, the trend toward separate household formation among elderly women was underway prior to the increase in Social Security income. Kobrin argues that there has been a normative shift away from including nonnuclear members in families. Although the number of elderly widows who might move in with grown children has increased, the tendency toward multi-generational households has not. No doubt a combination of economic, demographic, and normative factors have been operating to allow greater achievement of privacy and independence in living arrangements during the post-World War II period.

Although the increase in nonfamily household headship on the part of women has been more dramatic, the increase in family headship has generated more public concern because of welfare implications for the women and children involved. Increases in rates of family headship have occurred primarily among younger women; given the decline in completed family size, women over 45 are less and less likely to have dependent children in the household when a marital dissolution or death of a spouse occurs. These women are much more likely to become heads of nonfamily than of family households. Hence, the composition of female family heads has changed in recent decades; as a group they are now younger, more often divorced or separated rather than widowed, and more often have young children present than was true in 1950 (Ross and Sawhill, 1975; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1955; 1981a). Whereas in 1950, a little over a third of female family heads had the responsibility of caring for dependent children, by 1980, almost two-thirds of female-headed families included own children under 18.

Differences in female headship by race are striking and have increased in recent decades. Black women are much more likely than White women to be family heads, and a higher

proportion have children under 18, both own and related children (Ross and Sawhill, 1975; Bianchi and Farley, 1979). In 1980, 40 percent of Black families were female-headed, compared with 12 percent of White families, and slightly more Black children under 18 were living with a mother only (i.e., 44 percent) than were living with both parents (i.e., 42 percent). Bumpass and Rindfuss (1979) estimate that three-fourths of Black as compared with one-third of White children born in the early 1970's will spend some time living with their mothers only.

Trends in marital status and family living arrangements as shown by the decennial census leave no doubt that many women will manage their own households at some point during their adult lives. Because of rising divorce rates and delays in first marriage, women are spending more early adult years single in their own households or setting up independent households in their middle years. Women are also increasingly likely to spend their later years living alone.

The economic implications of these changes are immense. The notion that women are cared for by men, first by their fathers and later by their husbands, has perhaps never been a very accurate picture. But now, more than ever, the training, labor force participation, and earnings of women are important because of women's increased need, as well as preferences, to rely on their own resources at different stages in the life course.

EDUCATION

Historically, women have had lower college enrollment and completion rates than men, but there has been substantial narrowing of the difference during the past 30 years. Women's college enrollment rates have increased since 1950 while rates for men, which increased in the 1950's and 1960's, have fallen off in the 1970's. By the fall of 1981, college enrollment rates for men and women aged 20 to 21 had become quite similar and rates for women aged 18 to 19 had surpassed those of men (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982e: table A-3 and unpublished tabulations).

Although women have closed the gap in college enrollment and are edging closer to males in the attainment of higher degrees, the content of their postsecondary education remains different from that of men. Data gathered in the Current Population Survey (CPS) in 1966 and 1978 show that a higher percentage of women than men major in education, the humanities, and the health sciences, and relatively fewer women major in the physical sciences, engineering, and business. These differences narrowed somewhat between 1966 and 1978,

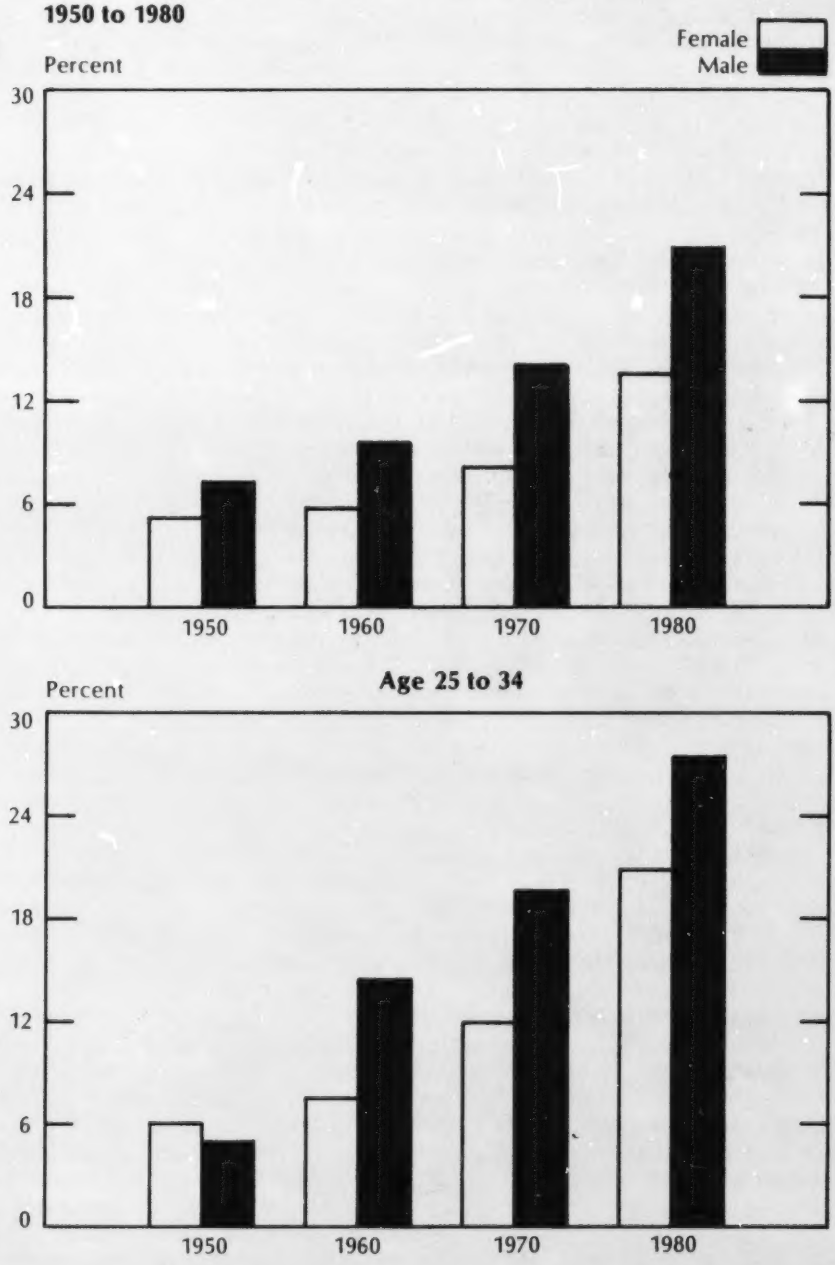
especially as more women came to major in business. The number of students majoring in business increased by 120 percent during the period, but the increase was 300 percent for women and 66 percent for men. By 1978, 22 percent of college men and 17 percent of college women were majoring in business (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980b: table 8).

Data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (1981a; 1981b) on degrees conferred show that almost half of the bachelor and master's degrees awarded in 1979-80 went to women. Only 30 percent of doctoral degrees were earned by women but even at this level there was considerable increase for women, particularly in the 1970's. In graduate and professional training, particularly in male dominated fields such as dentistry, medicine, law, engineering, math, and science, women have increased their proportion but remain distinctly in the minority. Currently, a fifth of all law degrees are earned by women, a sizable increase over the 5 percent they earned in 1969-70. Almost 20 percent of medical degrees go to women, a doubling of the percentage in 1969-70. Only 7 percent of dentistry degrees are earned by women, but even this is an increase from less than one percent in 1969-70. A very small percentage of engineering and physics bachelors or doctorates are earned by women.

In addition to current enrollment statistics, educational attainment data provide important benchmarks for assessing the educational progress of women. Currently, about 20 percent of men and 13 percent of women over the age of 25 have completed college. Among persons aged 25 to 34, the coresponding percentages are 28 for men and 20 for women. Between 1950 and 1980, the increase in college graduation was greater for men than for women: a 23 percentage point increase for young men, compared with a 15 percentage point increase for young women. The differential widened primarily in the 1950's, a decade of increased college graduation for young men, but little change for women. As shown in figure 3, percentage point gains for women have been comparable to those for men during the 1960's and 1970's. Whether the educational attainment distribution of adult women will eventually equal that of men depends on whether current college enrollment and graduation trends continue and whether graduate enrollment and completion rates increase among women during the coming decades.

The aging of recent cohorts of men and women whose post-secondary educational attainment is similar should eventually result in little or no difference in the percentage of men and women who are college graduates. Whether differentials by sex in college major and in entry into graduate and professional programs will narrow is a separate, perhaps more important, issue. It is these differences which may be an important factor in future employment and pay gaps between men and women.

Figure 3.
Percent College Graduates Age 25 and Over, by Sex: 1950 to 1980



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980d: table 10; 1982c: table 6-3.

What factors stand in the way of women's attainment of higher degrees? Single women achieve levels of educational attainment more like that of men than of married women (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1980c:36). Thus, women's earlier age at marriage apparently is one explanation. On average, women choose to marry 2 years earlier than do men. Alexander and Reilly (1981), utilizing data in which pre- and post-marriage educational enrollment information was collected, have found that although the negative consequences of early marriage on educational attainment tend to be overstated, the greater liability for women than for men has generally been understated. Early marriage is not as much a deterrent to post-marriage educational enrollment as is sometimes thought, but early marriage is much more a deterrent for women than for men. As much as three-fourths of the post-marriage educational gap might be closed if women married as late as men.

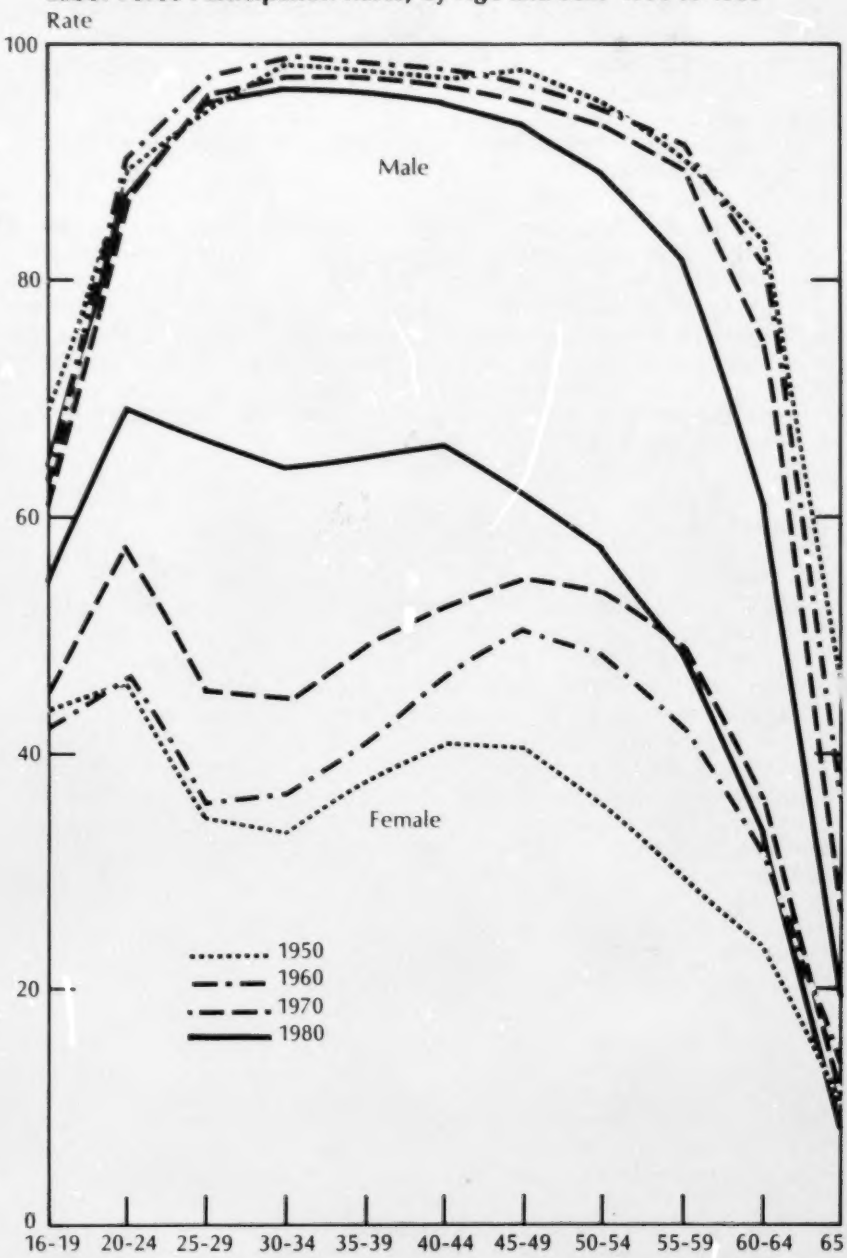
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Perhaps no other change has more far reaching implications for society and the economy than the dramatic increase in labor force particpation of women. Between 1947 and 1980, the number of women in the labor force increased by 173 percent (from 16.7 to 45.6 million), while the number of men in the labor force increased by only 43 percent (from 44.2 to 63.4 million) (U. S. Department of Labor, 1982a). Men's participation rates remain higher than those for women at each age but women have been increasing their rate of participation, while a decline in the rate of participation among men has occurred, particularly at older ages. For the population aged 16 to 64, women's participation rate increased from 34 percent in 1950 to 52 percent in 1980; men's fell from 87 to 78 percent (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980b: tables A-Z; B-1; U.S. Department of Labor, 1971: table Z-2; U.S. Department of Labor, 1981: table 3).

It is difficult to obtain concrete data on the employment of women during World War II, but the general notion is of a surge in female employment during the war years followed by a return to "Kuchen and Kinder" afterwards. The majority of women in the childbearing ages of 20 to 44 were tending home and children during the 1950's, although a sizable fraction of women either chose or found it necessary to work outside the home during this "familistic" post-war period. The lowest participation rate for any group of women under 65 was approximately 30 percent in 1950. The increase in female labor force participation during the 1950's was disproportionately accounted for by women aged 45 to 64, women who had completed their childbearing and most of their childrearing activities.

Figure 4.

Labor Force Participation Rates, by Age and Sex: 1950 to 1980



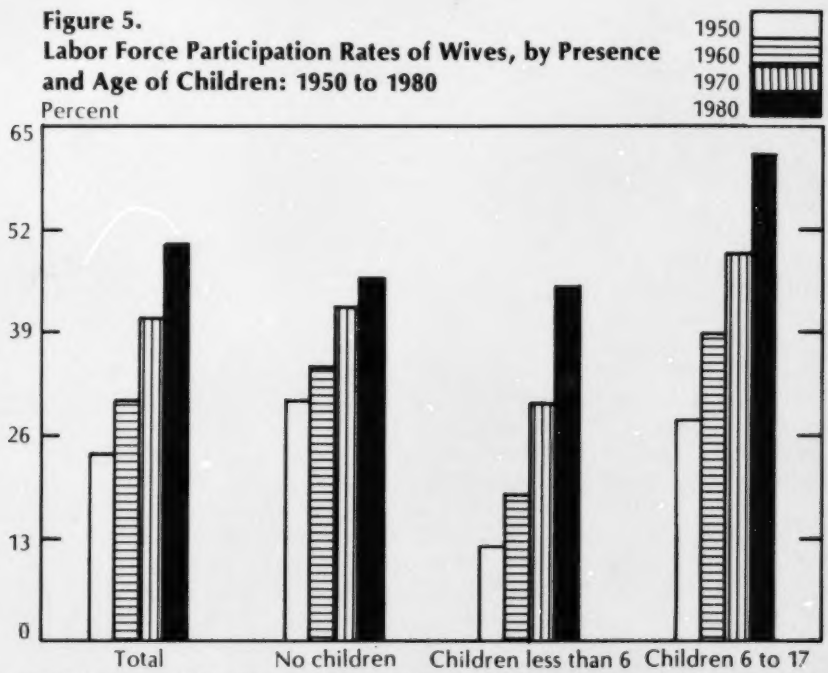
SOURCE: BANCROFT, 1958: table D-1 and D-1A, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1980B: table A-2; 1961: table B-1; 1971: table A-2; 1981: table 3.

Whereas the overall rate of participation increased by 3.9 percentage points during the 1950's, the increase was 11.8 and 10.2 percentage points for women 45 to 54 and 55 to 64, respectively.

The greatest increase in participation rates in the 1960's and 1970's was among women aged 20 to 44, women with childrearing responsibilities. In the 1960's the largest increase was for 20-to-24 year olds, followed by the 25-to-34-year-old women. In the 1970's, substantial increases were registered for all women under 45, and the increase in the rate for 25 to 34 year old women was more than twice the overall increase. The proportion of women working full time and year round has increased, particularly among women under 35. During 1981, 45 percent of employed women worked full time and full year (U.S. Department of Labor, 1982b: Table 3).

Figure 5, which is restricted to married women, shows that the labor force participation rates for women with children, even pre-school-age children, have increased dramatically since 1950. Whereas in 1950, only 12 percent of

Figure 5.
Labor Force Participation Rates of Wives, by Presence and Age of Children: 1950 to 1980



Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980: table 26; Johnston and Waldmen, 1981: table 3.

married women with children under 6 were in the labor force; this climbed to 19 percent in 1960, 30 percent in 1970, and reached 45 percent by 1980. And 62 percent of mothers of school-age children were in the labor force by 1980.

Given the increasing likelihood that a child lives with either one parent or two working parents, the demand and need for child care has grown substantially. Data from 1958, 1965, and 1977 supplements to the Current Population Survey document a shift toward care provided by a nonrelative outside the child's home (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982b). Not only are more women working outside as well as in the home, they also must make a stop at the babysitter on the way to and from work. Studies of time spent doing housework and taking care of children continue to show that working women do the major share of household tasks at the expense of leisure and sleep time (Berk and Berk, 1979; Robinson, 1977). As Judith Blake succinctly phrased it, "Women are thus faced with a rather inflexibly structured choice: too much work or too much leisure." (Blake, 1974:97).

Not surprisingly, the major reason for not working given by women not in the labor force is home responsibilities. Of those not in the labor force, 90 percent report that they do not want a job. Of these 90 percent, three-fourths give home responsibilities as their reason for not working outside the home, whereas for men the major reason given is retirement (49 percent) followed in importance by schooling (19.5 percent) (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980: table 14). These male-female differences reflect strong societal norms about the appropriate reasons for nonemployment of women and men. Taking care of the home is considered an acceptable activity for a woman, especially a mother of small children. It is less acceptable for men.

Not all women in the labor force are employed; participation rates include both those who are employed and those who are unemployed, i.e., those actively looking for work. Not included are those who have become so "discouraged" about the prospects of finding a job that they have stopped looking altogether. Women fall disproportionately into this "discouraged worker" group, particularly women with little job experience, relatively low levels of educational attainment, and few skills (Bednarzik et al., 1982:7). Generally, women's unemployment rates are higher than men's and both fluctuate with business cycles (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980). The gap tends to widen during good economic times and narrow during recessionary periods. During the first half of of 1980, for example, a sluggish time, male and female rates of unemployment were almost equal at around 7 percent.

The more highly educated a woman is, the more likely she is to be employed. In 1979, the overall labor force participation rate for college-educated women was 67 percent, compared

with 57 percent for those with a high school education. Rates for college-educated women who have divorced, separated, or remained single hover around 85 percent, compared with the 63 percent for those married, spouse present (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980: table 44).

Women have less tenure in their current occupations than do men. In the January 1981 Current Population Survey, an occupational tenure question was asked of all workers who had been in the same occupation in January 1980. Whereas 30 percent of men had been in their present occupation less than 3 years, 38 percent of women had less than 3 years experience. Reciprocally, 38 percent of men as compared with 27 percent of women had 10 years or more experience in their particular line of work (Rytina, 1982a: table 1).

Women also concentrate in different jobs and within different industrial sectors than men. Table 3 shows changes over time in the distribution of women across the 13 major occupational groupings. The groupings are so broad as to mask much of the occupational concentration by sex that currently exists. An increasing share of both male and female workers are employed in white-collar occupations. Between 1950 and 1980, the proportion of men in professional occupations increased from 7 to 15 percent, while the proportion of professional women increased from 12 to 16 percent. (Data for men not shown.) Women classified as professional, technical, and kindred workers tend to be in lower paying, traditionally female jobs. In 1981, half were either nurses or elementary or secondary school teachers (Rytina, 1982b: table 1). The proportion of women in managerial occupations has increased but is currently about half that for men (7 versus 14 percent). A much higher proportion of the female than of the male white-collar work force is concentrated in clerical jobs.

In 1980, women were proportionately overrepresented (by comparison to their overall percentage of the labor force) in clerical and service occupations. Women constituted 44 percent of all workers in March 1980, but filled 81 percent of clerical, 97 percent of private household, and 61 percent of other service occupations. Women were represented in professional (46 percent) and sales (49 percent) jobs roughly in proportion to their overall representation in the labor force. They were underrepresented in managerial occupations (28 percent), among operatives (34 percent) and greatly underrepresented in crafts (6.3 percent), laboring (11 percent), and farming (17 percent) occupations.

EARNINGS

Working women do not earn as much as working men. Common explanations are that women enter and leave the labor force

Table 3. Distribution of Female Civilian Labor Force and Percent Female, by Occupation: 1950 to 1980

Occupation	1950	1960	1970	1980
TOTAL WOMEN	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White-collar workers	52.5	56.3	61.3	63.5
Professional	12.2	13.3	15.5	15.9
Managers	4.3	3.8	3.6	6.8
Clerical	27.4	30.9	34.8	33.8
Sales	8.6	8.3	7.4	7.0
Blue-collar workers	43.9	41.8	37.9	35.5
Crafts	1.5	1.3	1.8	1.8
Operatives	20.0	17.2	14.8	10.7
Laborers	0.9	0.6	1.0	1.3
Private household	8.9	8.4	3.9	3.0
Other services	12.6	14.4	16.3	18.8
Farm workers	3.7	1.9	0.8	1.0
Managers	0.7	0.6	0.2	0.3
Laborers	2.9	1.3	0.6	0.7
	PERCENT FEMALE			
TOTAL WORKERS	27.9	32.8	38.0	44.2
White-collar workers	39.9	43.4	48.3	55.4
Professional	39.5	38.1	39.9	46.2
Managers	13.7	14.5	16.6	28.2
Clerical	62.3	67.6	73.6	81.0
Sales	34.3	36.7	38.6	49.0
Blue-collar workers	23.7	26.5	29.9	33.7
Crafts	3.0	2.9	5.0	6.3
Operatives	27.3	28.1	31.5	33.6
Laborers	3.7	3.5	8.4	11.2
Private household	94.8	96.4	96.5	97.2
Other services	44.7	52.4	55.0	60.8
Farm workers	8.6	9.5	9.5	16.6
Managers	2.7	4.8	4.7	9.7
Laborers	18.7	17.3	16.0	22.7

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975: Series D 182-232; 1982a: table 55.

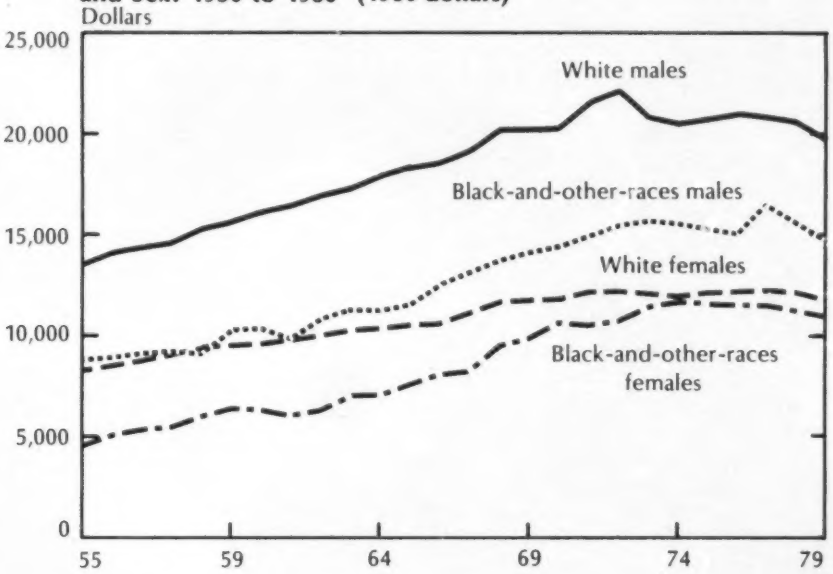
more frequently than men, resulting in less work experience (Fuchs, 1974; Mincer and Polachek, 1978); women's skills and education are not equal to those of men (Carnegie Commission, 1973); and women and men are concentrated in different occupations that pay differently (Treiman and Terrell, 1975). Research conducted in the last 10 years has tried to explain why earnings differences should persist when the educational gap between men and women has shrunk and when there are more women working full time than ever before (Featherman and Hauser, 1976). Although it is possible to quantify variables, such as work experience and educational attainment, it is more difficult to measure differences in hiring and promotion practices. Much research on women's earnings suggests discrimination but cannot prove it; that is, after all measurable variables are included in an equation on earnings differences for women and men, the variance that cannot be explained is attributed to unmeasured factors such as sex discrimination (Corcoran and Duncan, 1979; Oaxaca, 1973; Suter and Miller, 1973).

Earning differentials by sex have differed for Whites and Blacks over the past 25 years. In 1980, the median earnings for White women who worked full time year round were $11,703, compared with $19,720 for White men. White women's earnings were thus approximately 59 percent of White men's earnings in 1980. The earnings gap for White men and women has actually increased since 1955, when women earned 65 percent of what men earned. By contrast, as shown in figure 6, earnings for Black men and women have converged over time. In 1955, Black women earned 55 percent of Black men's salaries, whereas by 1980 they earned 74 percent as much as Black men. While Black women were still at the bottom of the earnings hierarchy in 1980, the gap between Black and White women's median earnings had narrowed dramatically. (Income figures for Blacks in figure 6 include persons of "other" race because data were not tabulated separately for Blacks before 1967).

Do men and women with the same education earn the same salaries? Using year-round, full-time workers as the basis for comparison, a woman aged 25 or over with a college degree in 1980 earned 62 percent of a male college graduate's salary. In fact, a female college graduate did not earn as much as a man with only 1 to 3 years of high school in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982a: table 51). That relationship has remained essentially the same since 1970. When the analysis is restricted to younger persons, the ratio of female to male earnings is somewhat higher. Women aged 25 to 34 with a college degree earned 71 percent of male college graduates' income in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982a: table 51).

Another important issue is the pay differential among men and women in the same or similar occupations. Table 4

Figure 6.
Median Income of Year-Round, Full-Time Workers, by Race and Sex: 1950 to 1980 (1980 dollars)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982a: Table 44.

shows median earnings of men and women by broad occupational groupings. Even in occupations that are traditionally female, such as clerical ones, men's earnings have been consistently higher than women's earnings since 1960. In 1980, the largest earnings gap existed for sales occupations in which women earned only 49 percent of men's salaries. One explanation for this situation is that men are more likely than women to be selling "big ticket" items such as cars, large appliances and jewelry, and thus make larger commissions. Men are also more likely to be in corporate sales while women are in retail sales. Despite an increase in the proportion of women in managerial occupations, their salaries in relation to men's have fallen somewhat since 1960, from 58 to 55 percent of male earnings. A group of occupations women have entered most recently--laborers--is the category with the lowest wage differential: Women earn 76 percent as much as men. Only a small proportion of female workers are laborers, however. Next to laborers, salaries of women in professional occupations are closest to those of men. Professional women earn an average of two-thirds as much as professional men.

When more detailed occupational classifications are examined, similar wage gaps persist. Rytina (1982b) has computed

Table 4. Median Money Wage and Salary Income of Year-Round, Full-Time Nonagricultural Workers, by Sex and Major Occupation Group: 1960 to 1980

Sex and occupation	1960	1970	1980
FEMALE			
Professional	$12,192	$16,717	$15,285
Managers	11,605	14,502	12,936
Clerical	9,973	11,779	10,997
Sales	6,752	8,887	9,748
Crafts	---	10,799	11,701
Operatives	8,260	9,570	9,440
Laborers	---	---	9,747
Private household	3,151	4,458	4,562
Other services	6,724	8,388	7,982
MALE			
Professional	$19,044	$25,052	$23,026
Managers	20,137	25,712	23,558
Clerical	14,592	18,285	18,247
Sales	16,005	20,774	19,910
Crafts	16,319	19,637	18,671
Operatives	13,841	16,176	15,702
Laborers	10,768	13,927	12,757
Private household	---	---	---
Other services	11,372	14,758	13,097
RATIO (FEMALE/MALE)			
Professional	.64	.67	.66
Managers	.58	.56	.55
Clerical	.68	.64	.60
Sales	.49	.43	.42
Crafts	---	.55	.63
Operatives	.60	.59	.60
Laborers	---	---	.76
Private household	---	---	---
Other services	.59	.57	.61

Note: Income inflated to 1980 dollars using Consumer Price Index. No income figures for occupations with small samples.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975: Series G 372-415; 1982a: table 55.

the average weekly earnings for 192 occupations for men and 129 for women in 1981. In the 91 occupations in which there were enough men and women to compare earnings, there was not one in which women's median earnings were as much or more than men's.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 made equal pay for equal work mandatory in many circumstances, and, in 1972, many exemptions to the Equal Pay Act were abolished (Burstein, 1979) but working in the same occupation is still no guarantee of the same wages for men and women. Occupational data broken into either broad or detailed categories indicate wide variation in the salaries paid men and women. Women often leave the labor force to raise children, and when they re-enter, they may have lost valuable time in their chosen fields. One explanation for the sex differential in earnings is that women have had less experience than men because of these work interruptions. (See Mincer and Polachek, 1974; Sandell and Shapiro, 1978; 1980; Corcoran, 1979; and Mincer and Ofek, 1982, for analysis of the effects of work interruptions on women's earnings.) Rytina (1982a) has found that length of time spent in an occupation affects both men's and women's earnings and that tenure has a stronger effect on women's than men's earnings. Her analysis suggests that only 4 percent ($.10 of the $2.71 average hourly wage gap) of the differential between men and women is due to the lower occupational tenure of women.

PER CAPITA INCOME AND POVERTY

A majority of adult women jointly maintain a household with a husband, making the economic role of wives important to the financial status of a large share of families. During the past two decades, the percentage of family earnings contributed by the wife has increased from 12 to 18 percent among Whites and from 17 to 28 percent among Blacks. Since 1959, real per capita income has increased in all types of households, but increases have been much more substantial in husband-wife than in female-headed households, partially because husband-wife households are increasingly likely to have two full-time wage earners (Bianchi, 1981).

A significant and growing minority of households are maintained by a woman. As the proportion of households headed by women has increased, the relative economic status of these households has declined. Nowhere is this more evident than in the poverty figures and, indeed, the "feminization" of poverty is a term used to describe changes of the past two decades. Table 5 illustrates the changing composition of the poverty population according to the official measures. These income data are confined to money income;

they do not include in-kind transfer income such as food stamps, Medicaid, or housing subsidies. Our description of the changing composition of the poverty population is not greatly affected, but estimates of the number in poverty are biased upward by the omission of such data.

Table 5. Changing Composition of the Poverty Population: 1959, 1970, and 1980

Race and type of family	1959	1970	1980
WHITES			
Total persons in poverty:			
Number	28,484	17,484	19,347
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Husb-wife/male-headed families	7.10	54.7	49.9
Female-headed families	14.8	21.5	25.5
Males not in families	4.1	6.2	7.6
Females not in families	10.1	17.6	17.0
BLACKS			
Total persons in poverty:			
Number	9,927	7,548	8,504
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Husb-wife/male-headed families	67.4	40.1	25.9
Female-headed families	24.4	48.4	58.6
Males not in families	3.3	4.0	6.6
Females not in families	4.9	7.4	8.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981f: Table 1; 1982e: Table 2.

Among Whites, the proportion of the poverty population living in female-headed families increased from 15 to 26 percent during the past two decades. Concurrently, the proportion of poor women not living in families rose from 10 to 17 percent. Data for Blacks are even more striking: 59 percent of the Black poverty population lived in female-headed families in 1980. Although the incidence of poverty has declined considerably among persons in all types of households, poverty rates among women heading households (both family and nonfamily households) are much higher than for male heads of households and husband-wife couples.

Women supporting families face two serious economic problems: women generally earn much less than men, so they frequently do not have sufficient earnings to support a family, and secondly, mothers raising children by themselves often receive no support from the absent father. Estimates are that only three-fifths of women with dependent children are awarded or have an agreement to receive child support. Of those three-fifths, only one-half received the full amount to which they were entitled during 1978, and 28 percent received no payment at all (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981d).

CONCLUSIONS

The most succinct summary of the past 30 years would be that fertility is lower and labor force participation is higher. That statement reflects the major differences between 1950 and 1980, yet there are equally important changes that have not been as visible.

For example, women are marrying later now than they did 30 years ago and, thus, have more time to attend school or gain work experience prior to marriage. It is difficult to measure the benefits of delayed marriage, but one outcome is that women have more time to establish economic and social independence before moving into a marital relationship. Delayed childbearing might be expected to have similar positive effects if couples are able to spend some years becoming financially and emotionally secure before the arrival of the first child.

Women are getting divorced more often, but they are also remarrying at a high rate. The net result is that although the vast majority of women spend a significant part of their adult lives as part of a married couple, an increasing proportion maintain their own households. Headship rates have increased greatly among women of all ages and marital statuses, and female family heads are much more likely to be supporting dependent children now than they were in 1950.

Since 1950, relatively more women are completing college and higher degrees, but they are still majoring in traditionally female fields. Labor force participation rates are much higher than in the past, but women are still concentrated in relatively few occupations. And, finally, the average earnings of women in relation to men have not risen over the past 30 years. The proportion of the poverty population living in female-headed households has increased as per capita income improvements in these households have lagged behind those for husband-wife families.

In the midst of significant change, tradition persists. The question for the upcoming decades is where the balance will be struck between the roles of women as wives and mothers and women as workers and economic providers for their families.

Appendix: Marital Status and Headship

Following are two appendix tables. Appendix table 1 provides detail on marital status by age and sex. Appendix Table 2 shows changes in the distribution of women across family statuses.

Appendix Table 1. Marital Status, by Age and Sex: 1950 to 1980

(Percentage Distribution)

Age and status	FEMALE				MALE			
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1950	1960	1970	1980
Total, 15 years and over	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	18.5	17.3	20.6	22.4	24.9	23.2	26.4	29.3
Married	67.0	67.4	62.8	59.0	68.9	71.1	67.7	63.4
Widowed	12.0	12.4	12.7	11.9	4.2	3.4	3.1	2.5
Divorced	2.4	2.9	4.0	6.6	2.0	2.2	2.8	4.8
15 to 17 years old	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	92.8	93.2	95.3	97.0	98.9	98.8	98.6	99.4
Married	7.0	6.6	4.3	2.9	1.0	1.1	1.2	0.6
Widowed	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Divorced	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
18 to 19 years old	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	68.9	67.9	76.6	82.8	93.4	91.1	91.2	94.2
Married	30.4	31.3	22.5	16.5	6.4	8.7	8.4	5.7
Widowed	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Divorced	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1
20 to 24 years old	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	32.3	28.4	36.3	50.2	59.0	53.1	55.5	68.6
Married	65.6	69.4	60.5	45.9	39.9	45.8	42.9	29.8
Widowed	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0
Divorced	1.6	1.8	2.5	3.6	0.9	1.0	1.4	1.6
25 to 29 years old	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	13.3	10.5	12.2	20.8	23.8	20.8	19.6	32.4
Married	83.3	86.2	82.5	70.4	74.2	77.2	77.1	62.2
Widowed	0.9	0.7	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1
Divorced	2.5	2.6	4.3	8.5	1.7	1.8	3.0	5.3

30 to 34 years old	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	9.3	6.9	7.4	9.5	13.2	11.9	10.7	15.7
Married	86.2	88.7	86.1	78.2	84.3	85.6	85.6	76.3
Widowed	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.1
Divorced	3.0	3.1	5.0	11.1	2.1	2.2	3.3	7.9
35 to 44 years old	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	8.3	6.1	5.7	5.6	9.6	8.1	7.8	7.4
Married	84.3	87.1	85.9	81.4	87.0	88.7	87.9	84.2
Widowed	3.8	3.0	3.0	2.2	0.9	0.6	0.7	0.4
Divorced	3.6	3.8	5.4	10.8	2.5	2.6	3.6	8.0
45 to 54 years old	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	7.8	7.0	5.5	4.7	8.5	7.4	6.4	6.4
Married	77.6	79.9	81.1	79.1	85.7	87.7	88.1	85.3
Widowed	11.1	8.8	7.9	7.0	2.8	1.8	1.7	1.6
Divorced	3.5	4.2	5.5	9.2	3.0	3.1	3.8	6.7
55 to 64 years old	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	7.9	8.0	6.8	4.6	8.4	8.0	6.5	5.7
Married	65.0	66.0	68.0	69.9	81.4	83.9	85.6	85.3
Widowed	24.7	22.3	20.2	18.9	7.6	5.0	4.1	4.0
Divorced	2.4	3.6	5.0	6.7	2.6	3.1	3.8	5.0
65 and over	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married	8.9	8.5	8.1	5.9	8.4	7.7	7.5	5.1
Married	35.7	37.4	36.5	39.7	65.7	70.8	72.4	77.6
Widowed	54.3	52.0	52.2	51.0	24.1	19.1	17.1	13.6
Divorced	1.1	2.0	3.2	3.4	1.9	2.3	3.0	3.7

Note: Married includes married, spouse absent.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975: Series A 160-171; 1981b: table 1.

Appendix Table 2. Headship Status of Women, by Age: 1950 to 1980

(Percentage Distribution)

Age and status	1950	1960	1970	1980
Total, 25 and over	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wives	71.2	71.9	68.7	64.6
Family heads	7.7	7.9	9.0	11.6
Nonfamily heads	6.6	8.9	12.8	16.2
Other	14.5	11.3	9.5	7.6
Total, 25 to 34	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wives	82.0	83.4	78.3	68.7
Family heads	2.9	4.9	8.0	12.2
Nonfamily heads	1.7	2.1	3.5	8.6
Other	13.4	9.6	9.2	10.5
Total, 35 to 44	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wives	81.7	83.5	81.3	76.2
Family heads	5.9	7.0	9.8	14.8
Nonfamily heads	2.9	3.0	3.2	4.6
Other	9.5	6.5	5.7	4.4
Total, 45 to 64	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wives	70.1	71.2	72.1	71.1
Family heads	10.0	8.7	9.1	10.9
Nonfamily heads	7.9	10.6	11.9	13.0
Other	12.0	9.5	6.9	5.0
Total, 65 and over	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wives	34.8	36.5	36.2	38.0
Family heads	14.4	11.5	9.3	8.9
Nonfamily heads	19.1	26.8	35.7	41.8
Other	31.7	25.2	18.8	11.3

Note: Excludes the population in group quarters.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1953: table 1; 1964: table 2; 1973: table 2; 1981b: table 6.

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